

**Comment Letter AL066***City of Visalia*

707 West Acequia, Visalia, CA 93291

*Administration***AL066**

Tel: (559) 713-4300 Fax: (559) 713-4800

August 27, 2004

Mr. Mehdi Morshed, Executive Director  
California High-Speed Rail Authority  
925 L Street, Suite 1425  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Comments on the California High Speed Rail (CHSR) Draft Environmental Impact Report and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIR/DEIS)

Dear Mr. Morshed:

The City of Visalia has reviewed the DEIR/EIS and appreciates the opportunity to submit the following comments:

Substantive Comments

1.) The City supports the CHSR project. We agree that the state's future inter-regional transportation needs can be best met by a high-speed rail project and agree with the essential position that the CHSR project is the preferred alternative to "No Project" and "Modal Alternatives." We also understand that the "steel wheel on steel rails" design is more economical than the "magnetic-levitation" option.

With respect to proposed alignments of rail lines through California to connect the metropolitan Bay Area with the metropolitan southern California (Los Angeles basin and San Diego), and off-set the aggregate costs to the overall state economy that would result from other alternatives to moving the resident and visiting populace of California around the state, we also agree that a HSR connection through the Central Valley is the most viable route.

Toward that end, and recognizing the delicate balance that the Authority must make between consideration for travel expediency, cost, and environmental protection in deciding on the more detailed decision of segment alignments for the project, Visalia strongly encourages the Authority's approval of the Union Pacific alignment between Fresno and Bakersfield, identified as Segments No. 5 & 6 in the DEIR/DEIS.

Both the Business Plan, adopted by the CHSR Authority in 2000, and the DEIR/DEIS do a good job in clearly identifying the various objectives of the project. The Authority and the California Legislature have the overarching obligation to adopt alignments that bring the highest return on the tax-payers' investments. We believe an alignment along the Union Pacific Railroad line near Visalia is the most logical route to achieve all project objectives, for the following reasons:

- Estimates by the City of Visalia show a 2020 projected population of approximately 700,000 persons in the Kings, Tulare and Southern Fresno County areas centrally located around the SR 99/SR198 intersection, essentially near the Visalia Airport and the approximate location of the UP line. Thus, the UP alignment can be expected to contribute beneficially to the attainment of a higher ridership volume and would have the superior accessibility to

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- residents of both Kings and Tulare County, with benefits to population growth in southern Fresno County, as well.
- The UP alignment is also proximate to 900 acres of City owned lands (the airport and the wastewater treatment plant facility and surrounding lands), either of which would provide the most logical location for a High Speed Rail station that would best facilitate interconnection to existing and future local intercity transit routes. This alignment would be more compatible with existing adjacent and future surrounding urban land development and services. Further, a station location near the Visalia Airport could create opportunities to enhance connections for faster ("same day") Fed Ex and UPS shipping, which could be viewed as a significant benefit to area commerce.
- The UP alignment would, for the area of Fresno, Kings, Kern, and Tulare Counties maximize operational and capital costs, while minimizing natural resource disruptions. These benefits are identified in the Business Report and Screening Report and largely supported by findings of the DEIR/DEIS. For instance, the BNSF alignment south of Hanford would cross more linear feet of rivers and canals than the UP alignment, creating costly canal realignment conditions for the BNSF route and generating corresponding environmental concerns.
- The UP alignment would be located in existing transportation corridors, so there would be less potential for significant environmental impacts. In addition, the Visalia station would accommodate more riders centrally, thereby reducing the amount of vehicle miles traveled to get the station, which would benefit air quality.
- The UP alignment would provide improved employment opportunities to the many agricultural communities along the route. High-Speed Rail related growth in service industries would diversify local job markets and provide jobs for low-skilled workers, thus contributing to a reduction of the area's historically high unemployment rate of 17%. The UP alignment would provide the highest potential benefit to helping to reduce unemployment.
- Much of the urban growth in the Central Valley in the last 50 years has occurred around SR-99, therefore there is less potential for impacts related to agriculture to occur along the UP alignment (runs parallel with SR-99).

AL066-1  
cont.

2.) The DEIR/DEIS makes it fairly clear that it is a "program" level or "tier 1" level document. Further, it notes numerous times throughout the document that subsequent "project" level or "tier 2" level environmental reviews will be done. It would be helpful if the document would explain in more detail the theory behind, and the intended process of how this second level environmental review is to be carried out by the Authority. Further, the document should identify who is expected to be involved in preparing and funding the subsequent level reviews, and how public input and review will be facilitated. It would also be helpful if the document contained a critical path diagram to show how and by when all the subsequent level environmental reviews would need to be funded and then completed through public hearings in order for the HSR project to be fully operational by 2020.

AL066-2

3.) We understand that various small cities along the Union Pacific alignment within southern Fresno County have expressed concerns that the location of the HSR line with attendant physical expansion of facility improvements and associated noise and vibrations will

AL066-3



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exacerbate the negative effects of the rail line bifurcating their communities. Even if it is proposed that the existing freight rail line would be elevated along with the HSR line, the sense of the bifurcation may still be visually apparent, not to mention that significant noise and vibration impacts would remain. There is concern whether the DEIR/DEIS has adequately explained the range of design options for "grade separation" and associated impacts from construction and related community disruption during construction. We project similar small cities within Tulare County and Kern County would share these same concerns. This points out the need that the DEIR/DEIS more fully evaluate possible beneficial effects of alternatives to "at grade" and aerial" alignments. In this vein, it is recommended that the DEIR/DEIS evaluate the possibility of a by-pass route to some smaller rural communities Selma, Kingsburg and Fowler. A similar option to mitigate the impact may be considered in areas to the South such as Tulare. In addition, the design alternative of "depressing" the two lines, as suggested in No. 3 below into a "trench" through these small rural, yet semi-urban in their core, communities should also be evaluated. Both a by-pass design and a "trench" design would provide the benefit of removing the "visual" divider of the communities, particularly if the freight line can also be accommodated on the by-pass, and may also serve to more adequately attenuate noise and vibration impacts. Removal of the rail divider in the community by utilization of a by-pass has the potential added benefit of facilitating better community design and function opportunities. Further, such evaluation of a by-pass alternative should consider or explore potential fiscal benefits to funding the by-pass from the proceeds of selling development rights within the current railroad alignment. The description of Segments 5 & 6 wholly ignore any mention of the potential range of impacts related to either a trench or by-pass options for the myriad of rural communities who will be impacted by the line passing through, but not stopping, in the community. While we understand that the DEIR/DEIS did not necessarily intend to get to this level of detail in impact assessments, the DEIR/DEIS should at least acknowledge more prominently the names and locations of the smaller incorporated or unincorporated communities, such as Selma, Fowler, Kingsburg, Tipton, Delano, Pixley, Earlimart, etc., that could potentially be impacted/benefited by various alignment alternatives to be looked at in subsequently tiered EIRs/EISs. This will ameliorate to some extent the perception of disenfranchisement of these communities, and issues related to environmental justice.

- 4.) An issue related to No. 2 above is that the DEIR/DEIS acknowledges numerous times and by figures, options to elevate the rail to achieve desirable/needed grade separations. Tunnel options in mountainous terrain are also acknowledged, but it is apparent tunnels are not needed throughout the relatively flat Central Valley. It is not as readily apparent, however, in the document (with the possible exception of a small footnote providing a literal definition on page 3.4-1) whether design-wise or programmatically, a "depressed", "trenched"/non-tunnel option was seriously evaluated as an alternative way to achieve grade separation or mitigation of noise or other potential impacts (and if it wasn't evaluated, why this option was eliminated.) This option needs to be acknowledged more overtly, and recognized as an alternative that may well be more suitable in specific circumstances or based upon community preference. A "depressed" design option may also be preferable to perceived negative aesthetic effects of an elevated rail. The DEIR/DEIS should acknowledge that the aerial structure option also has impacts involving disruption of current "natural" views or existing desirable view-sheds, and magnifying noise impacts, whereas a depressed alternative might avoid such impacts. Subterranean design may also better mitigate effects of vibration.

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- 5.) The DEIR/DEIS should evaluate the potential benefits or impacts to "light freight" (mail, etc.) movement around the State with the HSR. On page 3.1-17, under the heading of "High Speed Train Alternative", and its sub-heading "Transit, Goods Movement, and Parking", the text does not provide any serious assessment of "Goods Movement", except for a passing remark that the 258 grade separations will reduce conflicts between rail and roadway traffic and thereby facilitate some improved efficiency and safety of both vehicular and rail modes.

AL066-5

- 6.) The HSR alternative brings transportation services to many parts of the state that are not currently well-served by air transportation. The HSR alternative would provide more reliable service without the detriments of capacity constraints currently experienced in highway and air travel, including congestion and accidents, and is less susceptible to weather variations and is a more cost effective means to allow expanded travel service capacity with minimal infrastructure expenses (adding cars to make the train longer.)

AL066-6

- 7.) The Traffic and Circulation section should contain some discussion regarding the physical impacts from accelerated physical deterioration of State and local public roadways and highways and the related fiscal impacts to the State and local budgets should the high speed rail project not go forward. The DEIR/EIS seems to only focus on operational (i.e. level of service, capacity, and congestion) impacts of the "No Project" alternative. These same impacts may also result even if the HSR project does go forward, particularly if diminishing fiscal resources are diverted from road repair and enhancement projects in favor of the HSR project.

AL066-7

- 8.) Although the proposed alignment along the UPRR route poses some land use inconsistency conflicts, the proposed alignment along the BNSF route to the Hanford Station would be more incompatible with existing land uses, based upon data evaluations to date. The existing land uses along both potential alignments are predominantly agricultural. However, the UPRR alignment runs parallel with SR-99, an existing roadway that already creates a physical separation between land uses and within the communities that were spawned by its introduction. Furthermore, it should be noted that the future widening of SR-99, to accommodate transportation and population growth within the state in lieu of the HSR, would extend beyond the right-of-ways required by the proposed HSR alternative (and, on both sides of the highway), causing a potentially greater amount of disruption to community cohesion among the smaller communities that exist along SR-99.

AL066-8

- 9.) There is ample discussion within the DEIR/DEIS about the higher amount of floodplain acreage that exists within the UPRR alignment corridor as compared to the BNSF corridor, but the pertaining sections within the DEIR/DEIS seem to wash over the fact that the UPRR alignment would run along existing rail right-of-ways, therefore creating virtually "no change" in existing conditions. Mitigation measures should consider the elevation of rail lines or raising the grade of rail beds within sensitive sections of the alignment.

AL066-9

- 10.) While we understand that this DEIR/DEIS is a program level document, and that the findings associated with collected data will be further expanded through local and project level assessments, it would be helpful if some portions of data discussion were expanded within the EIR/EIS to facilitate local understanding of the resources involved with each proposed alignment. For instance, Section 6 of the document, High-Speed Train Alignment Options Comparison, provides the number of cultural resources associated with each segment of the proposed HST

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alignments. A list of these "known" cultural resources would provide the foundation for more focused research.

AL066-10  
cont.

Editorial Comments

1.) When the term "Tulare" is used in headings, text and graphics the document, it should be clear to differentiate between a reference to the "County of Tulare" or the "City of Tulare." Similar differentiations should be made when there are other cities that have the same name as the County in which it is located (i.e. Fresno.)

AL066-11

2.) Page 3.17-3 references a "sensitivity analysis conducted by Charles River Associates." This document does not appear to be included in the Appendices, but should be for the reader's edification. Alternately, the DEIR/DEIS should identify where the public may read or review the document.

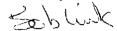
AL066-12

3.) Table 3.7-1 (page 3.7-3) lists "multifamily residential" under both medium compatibility and high compatibility with regards to land use. A differentiation should be made between the types of multifamily residential units that would incur high impacts and those that would incur fewer impacts.

AL066-13

The City of Visalia appreciates this opportunity to provide comments on the HST DEIR/DEIS. If you have any questions about these comments or the City of Visalia, please contact Mike Olmos, Community Development Director at (559) 713-4332 (e-mail at [molmos@ci.visalia.ca.us](mailto:molmos@ci.visalia.ca.us)). We look forward to the realization of this project and urge the Commission's selection of the Union Pacific Railroad alignment for the Fresno to Bakersfield Segment.

Sincerely,



Bob Link  
Mayor of the City of Visalia

cc: City Council  
Steve Salomon, City Manager  
Tulare County Association of Governments  
Cities of Tulare, Kingsburg, Fowler, Selma  
Visalia Chamber of Commerce  
Tulare County Board of Supervisors  
Tulare County Economic Development Corporation  
Visalia Economic Development Corporation

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**Response to Comments of Bob Link, Mayor, City of Visalia, August 30, 2004 (Letter AL066)**

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**AL066-1**

Please see standard response 6.15.4 and standard response 6.21.1. Please also refer to Chapter 6A of the Final Program EIR/EIS.

**AL066-2**

Please see standard response 3.15.13 in regards to the level of detail of a program EIR/EIS. Section 1.1 of the Final EIR/EIS describes the program level process. Explaining how future project specific studies would be financed is beyond the scope of this program EIR/EIS process. The Authority is developing an implementation plan to address future steps leading to an operational system. A draft implementation plan was made available for public review in early to mid 2005. A critical path diagram would be highly speculative and is neither required nor particularly useful at this point in the process to address all activities projected through 2020.

**AL066-3**

Acknowledged. HST alignment options to the west and east of State Route 99 that would bypass Central Valley communities were considered but rejected as part of the screening evaluation. Please see Section 2.6.9 of the Draft Program EIR/EIS. Application of trench concepts throughout Central Valley communities would result in considerably higher capital costs, and would not otherwise substantially alter the program level evaluation of potential impacts and conclusions regarding the UP alignment (please see standard response 6.15.4). Along the UP alignment freight activity from adjacent industries require that the HST tracks and the freight tracks be at different levels. Greater consideration of such design options will occur during the project-level environmental studies, if the proposed HST program moves forward. Please also see Section 3.18 of the Final Program EIR/EIS which discusses potential construction related impacts.

**AL066-4**

See response AL066-3.

**AL066-5**

The potential movement of cargo/freight is addressed in Section 2.6.3 of the Program EIR/EIS. Please also see standard responses 2.7.1 and 2.7.3 and response O016-8A. A specific scenario for goods movement services was not developed and analyzed as part of the Program EIR/EIS as this is not a primary purpose of an HST system as defined in Chapter 1: Purpose and Need.

**AL066-6**

Acknowledged.

**AL066-7**

Discussion regarding the physical impacts from accelerated physical deterioration of State and local public roadways and highways and the related fiscal impacts to the State and local budgets should the high-speed rail project not go or go forward are beyond the scope of this program EIR/EIS process.

**AL066-8**

Acknowledged. The technical reports concluded (see Sacramento-Bakersfield Land Use & Planning and Neighborhoods, Property, and Environmental Justice Technical Evaluation, January 2004) that the BNSF alignment option between Fresno and Tulare would be somewhat less compatible than the UP alignment option ("medium" incompatibility vs. "low" incompatibility). However, the Co-lead agencies do not believe that differences in land use compatibility are major differentiating factors when weighing the choice between the UP and BNSF alignment options from Fresno to Bakersfield. Please see standard response 6.15.4.

**AL066-9**

The Co-lead agencies believe the document clearly identifies where the HST alignments run along existing rail right-of-ways. The document also identifies the objective of utilizing existing transportation corridors to as great an extent as possible to minimize environmental impacts (see Chapter 1 of the PEIR/S). Section 3.14.5 "Mitigation Strategies" for floodplains of the Draft PEIR/S stated "Where no practical alternative to avoid construction in floodplains exists, minimize the footprint of facilities within the floodplains, e.g. by use of aerial structures or tunnels" (page 3.14-18). The Co-lead agencies do not believe that there are significant differences in potential impacts to water resources, wetlands or biological resources between the UP and BNSF alignments from Fresno to Bakersfield (please see Chapter 6A of the Final EIR/EIS).

**AL066-10**

Summary listings of cultural resources are provided in the cultural resources technical reports (Cultural Resources, Historic Architecture, and Cultural Resources, Archeology) for each of the HST regions – although locations of sensitive archeological resources are not contained in the reports. The technical reports, prepared for five regions of the HST project, served as supporting information for the Draft PEIR/S. The reports are available for review on the California High Speed Rail Authority website:

[http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/eir/regional\\_studies/default.asp](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/eir/regional_studies/default.asp), and have been incorporated in the Final PEIR/S by reference.

**AL066-11**

The Final Program EIR/EIS has been edited to distinguish between city and county for references to Tulare and Fresno.

**AL066-12**

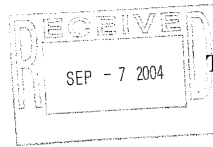
The sensitivity analysis conducted by Charles River Associates is documented in the Independent Ridership and Passenger Revenue Projections for High Speed Rail Alternatives in California, prepared by Charles River Associates, 2000. This document was referenced multiple times in the Draft Program EIR/EIS and is available on the Authority's website ([www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov)) under "Business Plan" (Business Plan Technical Studies).

**AL066-13**

Multifamily residential is a factor in both medium and high compatibility impact categories, but at different densities. The medium compatibility impact category includes multifamily densities up to 18 units per acre and the high compatibility impact category includes densities above 18 units per acre.



## Comment Letter AL067



**Town of Atherton**  
**Office of the Mayor**  
 91 Ashfield Road  
 Atherton, California 94027  
 650-752-0500  
 Fax 650-688-6528

August 31, 2004

California High-Speed Rail Authority  
 925 L Street, Suite 1425  
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: California High-Speed Train Draft Program EIR/EIS Comments

Dear High-Speed Rail Authority:

The Town of Atherton has reviewed the Draft Program EIR/EIS for the Proposed California High-Speed Train System. Our staff, our Caltrain Subcommittee, and our City Council have the following comments:

### Altamont Pass Alignment

The EIR/EIS excluded evaluation of the Altamont Pass Alignment Alternative. In earlier phases of the project, the Altamont Pass alignment was the preferred alternative, in part due to the larger population served by going through the Livermore Valley, Tracy, and Modesto than the other alignment alternatives that go through Gilroy and Los Banos.

Arguments have been made that the Altamont Pass Alternative may have considerably less environmental impacts than the alternatives being considered. Arguments have also been made that it has more. Because the environmental analysis for the Altamont Pass Alternative was never performed, this information is not available for comparison with the other alternatives.

The Altamont Pass Alternative has the unique benefit that it avoids the Town of Atherton. The High-Speed Train line would cross the Bay on the Dumbarton rail line and would enter the Caltrain corridor in Redwood City. Train service through Atherton would be only the Caltrain service, which would provide connecting service to the station at Redwood City.

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The alternative was eliminated because the trains for San Jose, San Francisco, and Oakland would have to split at Union City so that only one-third of the trains could go to each city. With the current alternatives, all the trains go through San Jose and then split between San Francisco and Oakland. **This is not an adequate analysis of an alternative to eliminate it without evaluating the relative environmental impacts.**

**The Atherton City Council, by unanimous vote, strongly recommends that the Altamont Pass Alternative be included, with a comprehensive evaluation of impacts, in the environmental document.** If the Altamont Pass Alternative has less environmental impact, then the Authority should reconsider the three-way train split and other project objectives that were used to eliminate the alternative.

### Catenary Visual Impact

The High-Speed Train system is proposed to be an electrified system with overhead catenaries. These wires will be a significant visual impact on the entire Peninsula rail corridor and particularly on the Town of Atherton where there are a significant number of residential properties abutting and near the tracks. Considerable funds have been expended in this Town and in many Cities along the corridor to underground overhead utility wires to rid the cities of the blight created by the proliferation of overhead wires. Adding electrification wires for the High-Speed Train System would be a major step backwards from a visual aesthetics standpoint.

Alternatives to mitigate this impact should be discussed at the program level. Advanced track and train technologies should be considered that would allow the trains to operate with a third rail through urban areas where the visual impacts would be severe. **A grade separated rail system through the Peninsula corridor would allow the use of a third rail, avoiding the visual and tree impacts that an overhead system would cause.** These impacts are significant and are applicable throughout the Peninsula corridor; therefore, it should be addressed at the program level.

### Heritage or Significant Trees

The Caltrain electrification EIR and arborist report determined that approximately 80 trees in Atherton would need to be removed. On the Caltrain corridor, 1,727 trees would need to be removed for electrification alone. The High-Speed Train system would have considerably more impact to trees in the Peninsula urban area than the Caltrain electrification project. There are a considerable number of mature and heritage trees along the corridor, especially in the Town of Atherton, that will be impacted by the project. **The program level EIR/EIS needs to identify these impacts for the corridor alternatives.**

The more significant impacts of a widened track section and grade separation on tree clearances needs to be disclosed in the EIR/EIS. **The specific clearance requirements**

AL067-1  
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AL067-2

AL067-3

AL067-1

## Comment Letter AL067 Continued

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**and the distance that the trees would need to be removed needs to be shown in the document.** Failure to identify these critical clearances is a major oversight.

Section 3.15C of the EIR/EIS sets local ordinances protecting biological resources as a significance criterion, but then does not discuss impacts or mitigation to resources protected by local ordinance, specifically native oak and heritage trees. These impacts should be evaluated at the program level similar to other biological resources.

### Cultural (Historic) Resources and 4(f) (Park) Resources

The addition of widened tracks, retaining walls and catenary poles immediately adjacent to the historic Atherton train station would have a direct and adverse impact on the historic train station and its site. Note that the station was restored in 1913, but the original station was constructed in 1866. Please see the attached 1913 picture of the Atherton station.

The test is not whether the structure itself must be modified, but whether the site and context of the station is modified. The test is also not whether it is adverse, but whether the adverse impact is significant. **Historic Station impacts need to be appropriately addressed, with significance determined in accordance with standard historical guidelines.**

The widened tracks, retaining walls, poles and wires, and the removal and trimming of screening trees will have a significant impact on Holbrook-Palmer Park, which abuts the project right of way. **Park impacts need to be appropriately addressed.**

The EIR/EIS states that mitigation can include alignment shifts to miss resources, relocation of resources including replacement parkland, noise barriers and visual screening. However, it states that shifts to miss one resource may impact another and that noise barriers can create adverse visual impacts. In such cases, mitigation may include cut and cover (similar to the trench discussed later in this letter, but with the track covered through the sensitive areas). In Atherton all these concerns apply. Additionally, the grade separations required to raise or lower the roadways would impact both the cultural and 4(f) resources within Atherton, as well as many adjacent properties. **The High-Speed Train project should identify and consider mitigation options through the Atherton station historic area and the Holbrook-Palmer Park area.**

### Public Services

This element of CEQA is not discussed in the EIR/EIS. An evaluation of impacts to public services, such as the Atherton Police Department, City Hall, Post Office, Library, Permit Center, and Public Works Corporation Yard should be included. These impacts may be relevant in evaluating alignment alternatives and should be quantified. **Please**

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**include these Town of Atherton facilities, and address the impact thereon, in the report.**

### Potential Interference with Resident's Electronics

This element is adequately discussed in the EIR/EIS. **The Authority should assure that these impacts will be evaluated in detail in the project level environmental analysis.** The EIR/EIS discusses adequate mitigation to be applied during project design.

### Avoidance or Mitigation

**The EIR/EIS should address alternatives that have been considered to avoid or mitigate the anticipated significant impacts as noted above and in the report.** One alternative that could considerably reduce some of these impacts to Atherton would be a Trench Corridor Treatment. The Atherton Caltrain Corridor Subcommittee reviewed the Alameda Corridor in Los Angeles, where an upgraded freight line from the Port of Long Beach was constructed in a trench for its entire length to avoid impacts to surface streets and properties.

**The Atherton City Council strongly urges the High-Speed Rail Authority to study, during the project design process, the potential to place the High-Speed Rail system in a trench through Atherton** (and Menlo Park and other neighboring Cities if necessary to make it work). This design option will avoid significant impacts to cultural and 4(f) resources (historic Atherton train station and Holbrook-Palmer Park), to protected biological resources (heritage and significant trees), and to adjacent properties. It will also reduce the division between portions of the community instead of enhancing the division by the placement of linear walls or embankment to support a raised track bed. And finally, and extremely important, it will reduce the visual and noise impacts of the High-Speed Train system on the surrounding community.

Safety should be another important consideration favoring a trench configuration rather than at-grade or above-grade tracks in populated residential areas. A 100 to 124 mph derailment in a populated area, either accidental or through sabotage, would cause considerably less damage and loss of life if constrained by a trench.

Concern has been expressed that the trench option would encounter difficulties crossing local creeks and streams. Town staff notes that conventional hydraulic design options exist for the Atherton Channel creek crossing, either by an aqueduct over the tracks, by an adequately sized siphon under the tracks, or by a pump station with redundant pump capacity exceeding the 100 year flow in the channel (to be operated and maintained by the High-Speed Train operator). Floodwalls may be required to reduce the potential for flooding of the rail line.

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AL067-5

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**Comment Letter AL067 Continued**

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Please address the above comments in your Final EIR/EIS, and advise us of what action you propose to avoid or mitigate the dramatic tree and visual impacts to the Town of Atherton. **If these impacts can be neither avoided nor mitigated, the Authority is required to make a finding of overriding considerations before proceeding with the project.** Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kathy McKeithen  
Mayor

Attachment: 1913 Atherton station picture



**Response to Comments of Kathy McKeithen, Mayor, Town of Atherton, August 31, 2004 (Letter AL067)****AL067-1**

Please see standard response 2.18.1. See standard response 6.3.1.

**AL067-2**

To avoid extensive impacts associated with widening the existing Caltrain corridor, the HST Alternative is assumed to share tracks with Caltrain services between San Jose and San Francisco. Alternative power supply systems (such as third rail) will be considered only to the extent that they are compatible with all services that share the infrastructure, including commuter rail and freight services. Visual impacts are highly site-specific in nature. These issues will be addressed in much more detail during subsequent project level environmental review, based on more precise information regarding visual setting and the location of and design options for the facilities proposed (e.g., elevated, at-grade, and catenary design features). The more detailed engineering associated with project level environmental analysis will allow the Authority to further investigate ways to avoid, minimize and mitigate potential visual affects. Once the alignment is refined and the facilities are fully defined through project level analysis, and after avoidance and minimization efforts have been exhausted, specific impacts and mitigation measures will be addressed.

**AL067-3**

The PEIR/S level of detail is appropriate for the identification of preferred alignment options for the HST Alternative. However, an additional program EIR/EIS is to be prepared addressing the Northern Mountain crossing between the Bay Area and Central Valley and proposed HST service in the Bay Area (please see standard response 6.3.1). More detailed planning and environmental evaluation will be completed following selection of preferred corridor alignment options. Please also see standard response to 3.15.7. At this point in the planning process, it is not possible to determine precise right-of-way requirements for specific segments (e.g. on the

Caltrain alignment through Atherton). Therefore it is impossible to precisely answer the questions in this comment; however, these questions would be addressed in the project-level, Tier 2 environmental evaluations. Please see standard response 3.15.2 regarding the general level of detail in the PEIR/S and the anticipated future project-level, Tier 2 evaluations.

**AL067-4**

The Final Program EIR/EIS indicates that the proposed rail service within the existing Caltrain alignment would have minimal potential use of existing 4(f) and 6(f) resources, because the proposed rail service would not greatly change the condition or use of the corridor. Specific impacts to historic stations and adjacent parks will be addressed during subsequent project level environmental review. The detailed engineering associated with the project level environmental analysis will allow the Authority to further investigate ways to avoid, minimize and mitigate any potential use 4(f) and 6(f) resources like those in the Holbrook-Palmer Park area.

**AL067-5**

Greater specificity in alignment location and profile, station designs, system access, and control systems is needed in order to be able to address the potential impacts on specific public services. Please refer to Section 3.0 of the Final Program EIR/EIS in regards to how public services have been addressed in the Program EIR/EIS. These issues will be addressed during subsequent project level environmental review, when more precise information will be available regarding location and design of the facilities proposed (e.g., elevated, at-grade, access locations, station design features, fencing type and location, etc.). The detail of engineering associated with the project level environmental analysis will allow the Authority to identify system requirements and further investigate ways to avoid, minimize and mitigate potential affects.

**AL067-6**

Acknowledged. Potential EMF/EMI impacts would be analyzed and appropriate mitigation identified in the subsequent project level environmental review, as summarized in the Program EIR/EIS Section 3.6.4 and 3.6.5.

**AL067-7**

As part of ongoing avoidance and minimization efforts, the Authority will consider a trenched profile design options for this area during subsequent project level environmental review. The more detailed engineering associated with the project level environmental analysis will allow the Authority to identify site-specific system requirements to better compare the impacts and benefits of these types of design variations.

## Comment Letter AL068

AL068



BAY AREA  
AIR QUALITY  
MANAGEMENT  
DISTRICT

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John F. Silva

SONOMA COUNTY  
Tim Smith  
Pamela Torlitt

Jack P. Broadbent  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER/APCO

Joseph E. Petrillo  
Chairperson, Board of Directors  
California High-Speed Rail Authority  
925 L Street, Suite 1425  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: California High-Speed Train Draft Program EIR/EIS

Dear Mr. Petrillo:

Bay Area Air Quality Management District (District) staff have received the Draft Program Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (DEIR/DEIS) for the proposed California High-Speed Train System. The proposed project would provide a 700-mile high-speed train system (HST) for intercity travel in California between the major metropolitan centers of Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay Area in the north, through the Central Valley, to Los Angeles and San Diego in the south. The proposed HST system would operate bullet-style trains capable of speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour on a fully grade-separated track, and is projected to carry as many as 68 million passengers annually by the year 2020.

The Bay Area is currently a non-attainment area for national and state ambient air quality standards for ground level ozone and state standards for particulate matter. Since motor vehicles constitute the largest source of air pollution in the Bay Area, the District has a strong interest in promoting alternative modes of transportation. Intercity high-speed rail service can help air quality if it provides a cleaner alternative to automobile and airplane travel. However, because the California High-Speed Train System would amount to such a significant transportation investment, it is essential that the project be planned and operated to maximize its public benefits (including air quality benefits), in order to justify the substantial public cost. We have reviewed the DEIR/DEIS, and we are providing comments on the air quality aspects of the proposed project.

We support the California High-Speed Rail Authority's stated needs for the project, especially in response to the pressure on natural resources as a result of expanded highways and airports (Purpose and Need and Objectives, p. 1-5) and the goal of improving air quality. We agree that the proposed HST system could have multiple air quality benefits including: 1) lower air pollution emissions from train propulsion compared to projected automobile and airplane emissions; and 2) an improved, more efficient statewide passenger rail system that could result in increased transit ridership throughout the state, thereby reducing automobile trips and emissions. If these stated air quality goals can be met by the proposed HST system, we support this project and encourage your agency to begin implementation as soon as practicably possible.

August 31, 2004

AUG 31 2004

Mr. Joseph E. Petrillo

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August 31, 2004

We are aware of concurrent passenger rail improvement projects being proposed for the same Bay Area corridors as the HST system, such as the Caltrain Electrification Program and the Transbay Terminal/Caltrain Extension. In addition, upgrades to the Amtrak/Capitol Corridor rail line in the East Bay would be necessary in order to be compatible with an electrified HST system. Therefore, we urge your agency to continue coordinating the proposed HST system with these other regional rail service providers to ensure compatible infrastructure and maximum efficiency.

AL068-2

We understand that the HST system route alignments and stations have not been finalized and that the route between the Central Valley and the Bay Area has been a controversial issue. We support the decision by the California High Speed Rail Authority to reject the Altamont Pass alignment because it would not effectively meet intercity travel demand and would require greater public investment in a new Bay crossing to service the Peninsula and San Francisco. Along with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), we generally prefer the Pacheco Pass alternative; however, we have concerns about which specific version of that alignment will be selected. We support an alignment that will maximize air quality benefits, capture the greatest number of riders, be the most operationally efficient, and not require excessive tunneling or cause other negative environmental impacts.

AL068-3

We recommend that, with regards to planning for station locations and related land use development, the HST system not be treated like a commuter rail system. We envision the HST system connecting existing urbanized parts of the state, in order to reduce current and future intercity automobile and airplane trips. If new rail stations are built in existing rural areas, we would have concerns about the potential for negative long-term impacts from induced growth in those areas. Therefore, we strongly suggest that the Authority not provide HST stations in non-urbanized areas, particularly in Los Banos. In addition to the potential for growth inducement, the DEIS/DEIR states that a station at Los Banos "would have low ridership and revenue potential, and limited connectivity and accessibility" (p. 6-20). We believe public resources would be better utilized providing intercity rail service in already urbanized areas where there is existing transit infrastructure, adequate ridership and revenue potential.

AL068-4

We understand that the DEIR/DEIS is a programmatic document and that once the Authority selects a precise alignment and stations, more specific project-level environmental analysis will be conducted. We are pleased to note that the Authority expects to address potential project-level air quality impacts through the following mitigation strategies: promoting public transit; encouraging alternatively fueled vehicles, and providing parking for carpools, bicycles and other alternative modes (p. 3.3-33). We strongly support these measures and also encourage the Authority to work with city and county agencies to emphasize local smart growth strategies including providing higher density development and a mixture of appropriate and compatible land uses near proposed HST stations. However, in station areas with nearby existing industrial land uses, we would be concerned about potential land use conflicts that might arise from the introduction of new sensitive receptors to areas with existing sources of air pollution. Air quality problems can arise when sources of air pollution and sensitive receptors are located near one another. If there are nearby industrial uses, rail passengers and new residents may be affected by odors, dust, and diesel exhaust impacts from activities associated with those existing uses. Citizen complaints can lead to nuisance cases that are difficult and

AL068-5

AL068-1

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**Comment Letter AL068 Continued**

Mr. Joseph E. Petrillo

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August 31, 2004

expensive to resolve. We suggest that the Final EIR/EIS contain a screening level analysis of potential land use conflicts between existing sources of pollutants/odors and proposed terminals, residential areas and other sensitive receptors. A screening level analysis will indicate if more detailed review will be needed in subsequent site-specific environmental impact reports.

AL068-5  
cont.

Finally, we have some concerns about potential construction-related air quality impacts of developing the HST system. The size and scope of construction activities associated with this project will likely generate significant amounts of fugitive dust near construction areas, unless thoroughly mitigated. Therefore, we strongly encourage your agency to implement all of the District's basic, enhanced and optional control measures for fugitive dust mitigation measures provided in our CEQA guidance document, *BAAQMD CEQA Guidelines: Assessing the Air Quality Impacts of Projects and Plans (1999)*. We urge the Authority to strictly enforce these mitigation measures in order to ensure that the project's construction dust impact will be diminished as much as possible.

AL068-6

We also urge greater emphasis on minimizing emissions from diesel construction equipment. The kinds of construction equipment necessary to construct new rail facilities (including boring tunnels) are primarily diesel-powered, and with continuous use, can lead to significant diesel particulate matter emissions. The District does not typically require quantification of construction emissions, but we do urge your agency to require the implementation of all feasible control measures. Our suggested mitigations include: use of diesel oxidation catalyst or particulate filters on construction equipment; use of alternatively fueled equipment (CNG, biodiesel, water emulsion fuel, electric); minimize idling time of equipment; maintain properly tuned equipment; and limit hours of operation of heavy duty equipment.

If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact Suzanne Bourguignon, Principal Environmental Planner, at (415) 749-5093.

Sincerely,

for   
Jack P. Bradbent  
Executive Officer/APCO

JPB:SB

cc: BAAQMD Directors  
Steve Heminger, MTC

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**Response to Comments of Gary Kendall for Jack P. Broadbent, Executive Officer/APCO, Bay Area Air Quality Management District, August 31, 2004 (Letter AL068)**

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**AL068-1**

Acknowledged.

**AL068-2**

Acknowledged.

**AL068-3**

See standard response 6.3.1

**AL068-4**

For reasons including those stated in your comment, the Authority has determined to drop consideration of the station option at Los Banos and it is not identified as part of the preferred HST system. See standard response 6.11.1.

**AL068-5**

The type of additional screening studies suggested is not appropriate at the program level of study, where there is insufficient specificity in the location of potential stations, but would be appropriate in future project-level studies considering potential station footprints, configurations and orientations, local setting, and nearby land uses and potentially sensitive receptors. Please see standard response 2.1.12.

**AL068-6**

Acknowledged. Section 3.18 of the Final Program EIR/EIS addresses construction methods and the potential for construction impacts in general. In addition, each section of Chapter 3 also outlines specific design features that will be applied to the implementation of the HST system to avoid, minimize, and mitigate potential impacts.